

# Ashley Scenic River Advisory Council

## River Notes

### Historic Overlay District for Ashley River Road

**Background:** Concern over new and potential developments along Ashley River Road has prompted Dorchester County Council to examine the zoning in the Ashley River historic area. This area includes land bound by the Charleston County line east to Bacon's Bridge Road (165) and the Ashley River south to County Line Road (see map on page 3). Initially, Council developed a draft R-8 zoning district that would limit density to one house per eight acres there. Despite the fact that nearly 200 people applauded the measure at its second reading in January, property right concerns prompted Council to send the ordinance to the Planning, Development, and Building (PDB) Committee.

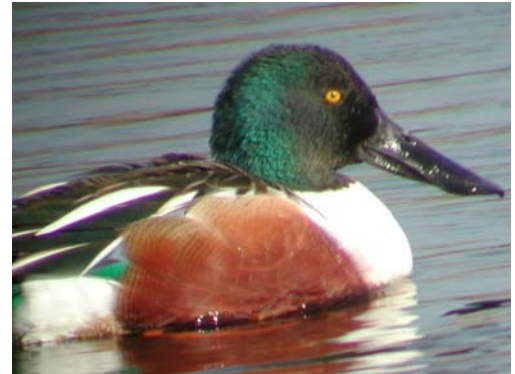
A 14-member citizenry ad hoc committee was convened in April 2005 to provide recommendations on zoning ordinances for the proposed R-8 and Ashley River Districts to Council. The areas on either side of S.C. 61 were considered separately for some of the zoning suggestions and have been called 'Preservation Residential District' and 'Historic Overlay/Plantation District,' depending on proposal. George Neil and George McDaniel, also ASRAC members, served as appointees on the committee.

June 2005, the committee presented its recommendations to Council. The ad hoc committee had differing recommendations, ranging from "no restrictions" to "one unit per four net acres" for the Preservation Residential District. "One unit per two total acres" was also a suggestion. The committee did agree on protective recommendations for the

area between Highway 61 and the Ashley River. These included a "one unit per three net acres," a 300' wide vegetative buffer on both sides of the road, and 100' wide buffer along the river for that section. The recommendations were taken as information.

The PDB Committee held another public meeting December 15th to examine zoning recommendations of "1 unit per 7,500 ft<sup>2</sup>) and a 50' buffer along S.C. 61. There was a strong and polarized public turnout and the meeting lasted over two hours. The PDB Committee decided to keep the item in Committee and are working on additional proposals for the scenic area.

*The Ashley River corridor provides valuable habitat for many wildlife and aquatic species, like the wood duck, pictured here.*



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### Poplar Grove: A success story

**Background:** Spring 2005, a unique partnership was successful in working with Poplar Grove developer to protect a key part of the Ashley River Plantation District in a conservation agreement. This agreement is being touted as innovative, bringing together an improbable group of developers, private landowners, and conservationists. The conservation plan provides for permanent restrictions on nearly half of the District's 30,000 acres, located on the suburban fringe of Summerville and Charleston.

The conservation plan reduced the number of houses from 3,500 homes to 450 for the controversial development; it also includes restrictions on 5,500 acres of Middleton Plantation 3,100 acres of Millbrook Plantation, 315 acres of Uxbridge Plantation, and smaller tracts along County Line Road. Over \$10 million was raised for the plan; partners included the State Conservation Bank, Ducks Unlimited, Ceres Foundation, Mills Bee Lane Foundation, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation, among others.

*"Who hears the  
rippling of rivers  
will not utterly  
despair of  
anything."  
—Henry David  
Thoreau*

# WHAT'S DEVELOPING?

## Watson-Hill

**Background:** A 6,650 acre parcel, two miles north of Middleton Plantation on Highway 61, is the source of some serious conflict. This tract was sold by MeadWestvaco for a reported \$34 M early 2005. Developers propose to build up to 4,500 houses, condos, a hotel, and a golf course. This development was presented to the Dorchester County Planning Commission in February 2005 and faced significant public criticism, including ASRAC member comment. Issues impacting the community include traffic, ingress/egress, historic preservation, taxes, EMS, schools, natural and cultural resources, and infrastructure, among other things.

In April 2005, a landowner with property along the Ashley River, the Barry's, signed a contract in to sell a 68-acre parcel in Mateeba gardens. This parcel is located between Watson Hill and the Kings Grant Golf Course, a property recently annexed into North Charleston. The Barrys canceled their contract upon learning that the buyer intended to sell the property to Watson Hill developer, Richard Lam. This transaction would enable North Charleston to annex the Watson Hill tract and zone it accordingly. Lam's company, Riverbronze, is suing the Barrys. Subsequently, a block of 24 property owners along the Ashley River requested to be annexed into Summerville, forming a barricade between North Charleston and Watson Hill.

**Update:** Dorchester County will not address Watson Hill's development request until the annexation issue is legally resolved. Mayor Keith Summey has vowed to fight Summerville's annexation. Coastal Conservation League, Drayton Hall, Middleton Place Foundation, and the Historic Charleston Foundation have each pledged \$250,000 for costs associated with the Barry family's legal battle.

## Dicari-Summerville Homes

**Background:** Dicari and Summerville Homes LLC submitted two rezoning requests for projects near Bacon's Bridge Road early 2005. The first was for an 83-acre gated residential community. The second was for a 3-acre rezoning for a two-story restaurant on the North side of the river and east of the bridge, just south of Summerville on 165.

The ASRAC found the residential development acceptable, as plans appeared to minimize intrusion onto the River Corridor. The Advisory Council was opposed to the commercial rezoning and spoke against it at County Council readings and a public hearing. Concerns included that the devel-

opment sets precedence for commercial development on the Ashley headwaters; that existing commercial development zoning ordinances are inadequate for protecting the River here; and that there were no definitive development plans submitted for review to Council. Dicari developers met with our Advisory Council in April 2005 and were amenable to considering our suggestions. Despite our concerns, County Council voted to approve both rezoning requests for Dicari last June. Matt Halter, representing Dicari at the hearing, said that they would consider the concerns as they proceeded with their plans. Our

suggestions include deed restrictions and river buffer setbacks.

**Update:** Dicari planners agreed to show the Council the complete development plans; and tentatively plan to present them plans at an upcoming meeting.

## Greenwood to Develop Ponds Plantation

**Background:** Just outside the Ashley River Historic Corridor, there are plans for an 1,887 acre development between Dorchester Road and 61 and at the headwaters of the Ashley River. Formerly Ponds Plantation, Greenwood Developers have plans for the property that includes Shultz Lake. Although Dorchester County planners deem the area a "suburban growth corridor," there is some concern about the infrastructural and environmental impacts from the development in this critical area.

The Greenwood developer, John Morgan, met with the Advisory Council in March to present the development. Council generally agreed that the approach seemed well thought out and consistent with the scenic river management plan. The plan called for wetlands easements for 1,100 acres and a 125' vegetative buffer along the rivers. The developer also said that he was willing to work with conservation groups and open to community suggestions. However, the Advisory Council had some concerns. Specifically, apprehension about phased density increases for the development were founded on the fact that all ingress and egress for this development would initially occur on 17A. This would change with the expansion of the Berlin G. Meyers expressway. Some concern was also voiced over the historic significance of the property, especially at a larger density. In response to these concerns, Ponds revised their plan in June 2005 from 2,500 to 1,950 new homes over the next 10 years.

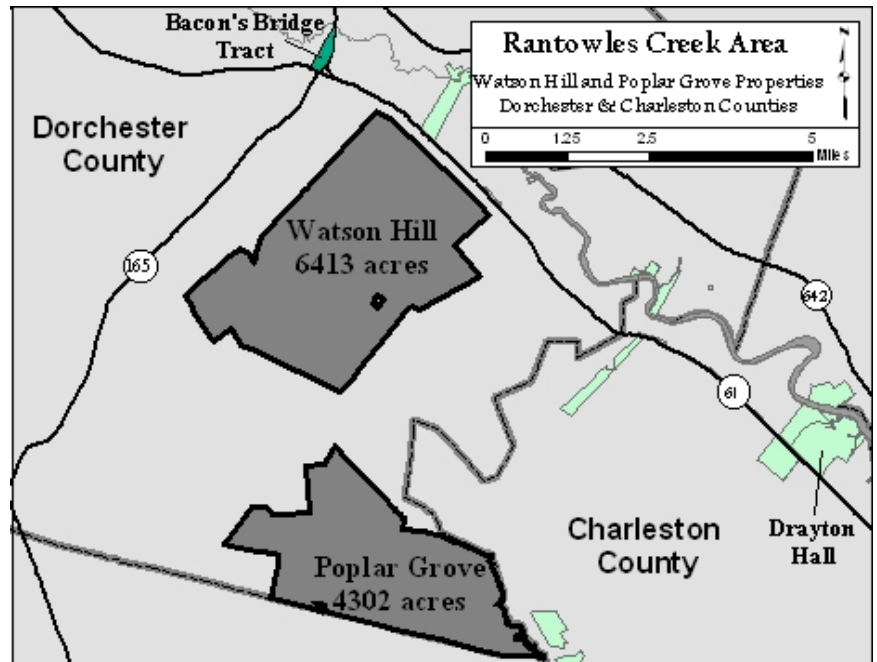
Greenwood submitted a development agreement instead of a planned development in early September and was approved by County Council in December with an annual review and infrastructural growth stipulations.

## Bacon's Bridge Park

**Background:** Fall 2004, it was announced that Charleston Southern University (CSU) planned to sell a 68-acre parcel with frontage along Bacon's Bridge Road. The parcel would be sold to the Lowcountry Open Land Trust for use as a county park. Over 150 locals showed up at the September 2004 County Council meeting to show their support for the park.

Later, CSU backed out of the agreement, claiming that the original contract was invalid because the closing deadline had expired. The Land Trust explains that CSU caused the delay. There is some speculation that CSU partners may have other plans for the tract.

**Update:** The case has been referred to the Master in Equity for Dorchester County. The Land Trust anticipates that the issue will be tied up in court for some time.



*Map highlighting areas of interest to the Ashley Scenic River.*

## King's Grant Golf Course

Early 2005, owners of the 178-acre King's Grant Golf Course, T2 Green, offered \$1,000 to each member of the King's Grant homeowners association. T2 Green wanted to change the homeowner covenant to allow the course to be residentially developed. Over 80 percent of the homeowners signed a petition opposing the development. Golf Course owners then declared bankruptcy in June and sued all King's Grant homeowners.

Additional controversy arose after North Charleston County Council voted to annex the Golf Course. It was revealed that North Charleston City Councilman, Jesse Dove, was a part owner of T2 Green, along with the John Meeks family. Dorchester County Councilman Larry Hargett filed a complaint with the State Ethics Commission regarding Dove's conflict of interest, but they determined that he did not knowingly violate ethics rules.

**Update:** This issue is still in the courts and the King's Grant homeowners are conducting fundraising for their legal costs.

**Beach/River Sweep**—Alison Krepp organized this year's Beach Sweep/River Sweep cleanup on September 17th. It was a great success. About 7,000 volunteers participated throughout SC. Carolyn Tomlinson of Clemson Extension organized the Jessen's Landing sweep for the Ashley. She reported that 237 participated, including 7 Boy 3 Girl Scout troops! We appreciate all the volunteers and thank Middleton and Drayton Hall for providing volunteer passes. Way to go!

**Phosphate Industry on the Ashley**—Some Ashley River area landowners were concerned about potential construction and excavation property containing phosphate industry remains. Concerns were founded in the destruction of historically significant brickwork from the late 1800s, not federally designated for protection. Further investigation prompted the SC Dept. of Archives and History and Historic Charleston to agree that these structures should be recognized as historically significant. Letters from both groups were composed noting the significance of these structures.



*Volunteers for this year's Ashley River cleanup.*

## For Further Information:

Lindsay White  
SC DNR Conservation Districts  
217 Fort Johnson Road, PO Box 12559  
Charleston, SC 29422-2559  
Telephone: 843.834.3254  
Email: [whitel@dnr.sc.gov](mailto:whitel@dnr.sc.gov)  
Or  
Bill Marshall  
S.C. Department of Natural Resources  
1000 Assembly St., Suite 354  
Columbia, SC 29201  
Telephone: 803.734.9096  
Email: [marshallb@dnr.sc.gov](mailto:marshallb@dnr.sc.gov)

**We're on the web!**  
**[http://www.dnr.sc.gov/water/  
envaff/river/ashley\\_scenic.htm](http://www.dnr.sc.gov/water/envaff/river/ashley_scenic.htm)**

The Ashley Scenic River Advisory Council is composed of local citizens representing river-bordering landowners, river users, and community groups with interests in the river. The Legislature designated the Ashley as a State Scenic River in 1998. The Advisory Council was formed in 1999 and the Council completed the Ashley Scenic River Management Plan in 2002.

The Ashley Scenic Management Plan expresses Council's goals and recommendations, which are a product of a two-year community input process. The Council has no regulatory authority and their goals are pursued primarily through education and advocacy.

The Management Plan advocates several practices for land management and development that promote conservation for the Ashley River area. Practices include (1) vegetative buffers along the river and the road with setbacks for development; (2) limited development that results in lower densities of buildings and more open, undeveloped space; and (3) stormwater management that reduces polluted runoff and attenuates flushes of water to river tributaries.

## Ashley Scenic River: Year In Review

INSERT ADDRESS

INSERT ADDRESS

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